

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

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R 191712Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2214

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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USEC BRUSSELS 1704

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TAGS: ELAB, SP

SUBJECT: SYNDICAL ELECTIONS IN PROGRESS

REF : MADRID 3284

SUMMARY: FACTORY-LEVEL SSO SYNDICAL ELECTIONS, IN WHICH CLANDESTINE LABOR GROUPS SUCH AS WORKERS COMMISSIONS AND USO ARE ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION AND OTHERS SUCH AS UGT ARE ENCOURAGING ABSTENTION, ARE NEARING COMPLETION. WORKERS ARE PARTICIPATING MASSIVELY, EXCEPT FOR BASQUE COUNTRY, AMID INDICATIONS COMMUNISTS AND MEMBERS OTHER CLANDESTINE GROUPS ARE BEING ELECTED TO MANY SHOP STEWARD POSITIONS, END SUMMARY.

1. SPAIN IS IN MIDST OF JUNE 8-30 PLANT-LEVEL NATIONWIDE QUADRIENNIAL ELECTIONS OF GOVT-CONTROLLED SPANISH SYNDICAL ORGANIZATION (SSO), IN WHICH 300,000 SHOP STEWARD AND
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OTHER SSO FACTORY-LEVEL POSITIONS WILL BE FILLED.

2. ELECTORAL RULES ARE RELATIVELY LIBERAL, WITH ALL WORKERS OVER 18 ELIGIBLE VOTE. UNLIKE PREVIOUS ELECTIONS, WHERE ONLY HALF OF ALL SHOP STEWARD POSITIONS WERE ELECTED, ALL POSITIONS ARE NOW AT STAKE. THERE ARE, HOWEVER, TWO SIGNIFICANT RESTRICTIONS ON CANDIDATES: (A) REQUIREMENT ALL CANDIDATES MUST HAVE BEEN EMPLOYED AT CURRENT WORK PLACE FOR MINIMUM OF PAST TWO YEARS, AND (B) RULE RENDERING INELIGIBLE ANY SHOP STEWARD ELECTED IN PREVIOUS 1971 ELECTIONS WHO SUBSEQUENTLY RESIGNED FROM POST. THESE RESTRICTIONS HAVE MADE INELIGIBLE SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER WOULD-BE CANDIDATES, BECAUSE MANY OF MOST ACTIVIST WORKER LEADERS HAVE BEEN FIRED OR TRANSFERRED FROM THEIR JOBS DURING PAST TWO YEARS FOR STRIKE ACTIVITY AND AN EVEN GREATER NUMBER PREVIOUSLY ELECTED MILITANT SHOP STEWARDS HAVE FREQUENTLY RESIGNED IN SOLIDARITY WITH WORKER DEMANDS. PLANT LEVEL IS ONLY FIRST PHASE SYNDICAL ELECTORAL PROCESS. LATER STAGES INCLUDE ELECTIONS FOR LOCAL, PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL SSO POSITIONS AND WILL BE HELD IN FALL.

3. ONLY A MINORITY OF CLANDESTINE LABOR OPPOSITION GROUPS ARE BOYCOTTING THESE ELECTIONS. THUS (A) WORKERS COMMISSIONS, PARTICULARLY PREDOMINANT COMMUNIST ELEMENTS, HAVE CALLED FOR FULL PARTICIPATION AND ARE RUNNING CANDIDATES IN EFFORT TO SUBVERT SSO FROM WITHIN; (B) SOCIALIST UGT IS PROMOTING BOYCOTT ON GROUNDS PARTICIPATION TANTAMOUNT TO COLLABORATION WITH "FASCIST" REGIME, ALTHOUGH SOME DISGRUNTLED UGT FEDERATIONS ARE DISREGARDING NATIONAL UGT DIRECTIVES AND PARTICIPATING ANYWAY; (C) MODERATE CHRISTIAN-ORIENTED USO IS PARTICIPATING FULLY; AND (D) ORT REVOLUTIONARY CATHOLIC GROUPING IS CALLING FOR FULL PARTICIPATION IN AREAS WHERE ORT IS STRONG (E.G., PAMPLONA) AND FOR ABSTENTION IN AREAS WHERE IT IS WEAK. NOTWITHSTANDING BOYCOTT APPEALS OF GROUPS SUCH AS UGT, GENERAL WORKER SENTIMENT FAVORS PARTICIPATION, ONE OF FEW OPPORTUNITIES SPANIARDS HAVE FOR FREE VOTE.

4. ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION TO DATE HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN MASSIVE, PARTICULARLY IN MADRID AND BARCELONA WHERE ELECTIONS NEARLY COMPLETED. TOP SSO OFFICIAL TOLD LABATT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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VOTER PARTICIPATION IS RUNNING AT 80-85 PERCENT. ONLY AREA WHERE CALLS FOR ABSTENTION MAY HAVE SUBSTANTIAL IMPACT IS BASQUE PROVINCES, DUE TO STRENGTH OF BOYCOTTING ORGANIZATIONS THERE AND TO TENSE CLIMATE EXISTING UNDER CURRENT STATE OF EXCEPTION.

5. PARTICULARLY ACTIVE PROMOTING ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION HAS BEEN BARCELONA SSO, UNDER LEADERSHIP OF LIBERAL

BARCELONA SYNDICAL DELGATE SUPPORTED BY LIBERAL LOCAL GOVERNOR, WHICH HAS SOUGHT TO MAKE BARCELONA ELECTIONS A DEMOCRATIC MODEL. SSO LEADERS IN OTHER AREAS, DESPITE NATIONAL SUPPORT FOR FULL PARTICIPATION, VIEW ELECTIONS WITH MISGIVINGS AS LIKELY TO ESTABLISH IN SSO SHOP STEWARD POSITIONS MANY COMMUNIST AND OTHER ELEMENTS WHICH WILL SEEK SUBVERT SSO AND THREATEN VESTED INTERESTS SSO LEADERSHIP. THEIR FEARS HAVE BEEN PARTIALLY JUSTIFIED: PRELIMINARY INDICATIONS ARE THAT A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF COMMUNISTS AND MEMBERS OF OTHER OPPOSITION WORKER GROUPS (SOME DEMOCRATIC IN NATURE) HAVE ALREADY WON SHOP STEWARD POSITIONS IN CURRENT ELECTIONS, PARTICULARLY IN LARGE FACTORIES SUCH AS SEAT PLANT IN BARCELONA.

6. COMMENT: IT ALREADY EVIDENT CLANDESTINE LABOR GROUPS PARTICIPATING ELECTIONS ARE MAKING SIGNIFICANT GAINS, SOMEWHAT TO CHAGRIN OF MANY IN SSO AND GOVT. AS IN PAST, HOWEVER, SSO HIERARCHY EXPECTED TO MANIPULATE HIGHER LEVEL SSO ELECTIONS THIS FALL SO THAT MAJORITY OF CURRENT SSO HIGHER LEADERSHIP WILL BE RE-ELECTED. THIS WOULD LEAVE SSO DIVIDED BETWEEN SOME FAIRLY REPRESENTATIVE SSO SHOP STEWARDS AT THE FACTORY LEVEL DEDICATED TO RADICALLY TRANSFORMING, IF NOT OVERTHROWING, SSO, AND GOVT-CONTROLLED FALANGIST-ORIENTED SSO HIGHER ECHELONS DEDICATED TO MAINTAINING SSO STATUS QUO. STABLER

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